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LIKELY DERBY, OAKS FAVORITES EPICENTER, ECHO ZULU BREEZE EASTER MORNING AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, April 17, 2022) – On a crisp Easter morning in Louisville, **Epicenter** and **Echo Zulu**, the likely favorites for this year's \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) and \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI), respectively, continued their preparation for the first weekend in May.

Winchell Thoroughbreds' \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII) winner Epicenter worked five furlongs in 1:00.80 at 6 a.m. (all times Eastern) inside of three-time winning 6-year-old **Gun It**. About 20 minutes prior to Epicenter's move, **L and N Racing** and Winchell Thoroughbreds' undefeated champion filly Echo Zulu cruised five furlongs in 1:00 outside of 3-year-old maiden colt **King Ottoman**.

"Sundays are a big work day for us," Asmussen said, who drove about eight hours overnight from Hot Springs, Ark. to Louisville. "We got to work Epicenter and Echo Zulu this morning. It was an exciting morning. The racetrack is in excellent condition."

Asmussen's exercise rider **Wilson Fabian** was aboard both Epicenter and Echo Zulu for their respective works while veteran jockey **Eddie Martin Jr.**, who's won 4,084 career races, breezed their company. Epicenter clipped through opening fractions of :12.60, :24.20 and 36. Fabian and Epicenter continued to gallop out strongly around the clubhouse turn and onto the backside with a six-furlong gallop out in 1:13.60 and completed seven furlongs in 1:27. Epicenter finished his move with a one-mile clocking of 1:44.

Echo Zulu, the \$400,000 TwinSpires.com Fair Grounds Oaks (GII) heroine, began her work in similar fractions to her stablemate and clipped off eighth-mile fractions of :13.20, :24.60 and :36.20. She and King Ottoman galloped out six furlongs in 1:13.20 and seven furlongs in 1:28.20.

"Both horses are training extremely well. It's obviously exciting going into the Oaks and the Derby to have two horses of this caliber doing so well," Asmussen said. "It's been standard (to work both of these horses in company) and the company they worked with is who they've been with in New Orleans. We're trying to create more of the same success they had there."

"With Epicenter the spacing of his races since December has been very effective for him. We're just trying to put the building blocks and space for him to handle the mile-and-a-quarter in the Derby here. I couldn't feel any better with how he's doing here and how he loves Churchill Downs."

Echo Zulu has been on a slightly different schedule this year than Epicenter. The winner of the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI) made her 3-year-old debut in the Fair Grounds Oaks.

"Her coming off the bench in quite a layoff and a determined victory, I was anxious to get her here," Asmussen said. "She actually had not trained at Churchill. She went from Keeneland straight to Saratoga, then won at Belmont and went to California. She has taken to the racetrack in both of her works very impressively."

With less than three weeks remaining to the Kentucky Derby and Oaks, several contenders continue to make their arrivals at Churchill Downs. Hall of Fame trainer **Todd Pletcher's** Derby duo of **Charge It** and **Mo Donegal** are expected to arrive Sunday afternoon. On Saturday, Oaks contender **Venti Valentine** arrived to Churchill Downs from Belmont Park and is stabled in Barn 25.

Saturday is the first day of the 15-minute exclusive training window for Kentucky Derby and Oaks contenders from 7:30-7:45 a.m.

ABOUT CHURCHILL DOWNS RACETRACK

Churchill Downs Racetrack ("CDRT"), the world's most legendary racetrack, has been the home of The Kentucky Derby, the longest continually held annual sporting event in the United States, since 1875. Located in Louisville, CDRT features a series of themed race days during Derby Week, including the Kentucky Oaks, and conducts Thoroughbred horse racing during three race meets in the Spring, September, and the Fall. CDRT is located on 175 acres and has a one-mile dirt track, a 7/8-mile turf track, a stabling area, and provides seating for approximately 60,000 guests. The saddling paddock and the stable area has barns sufficient to accommodate 1,400 horses and a 114-room dormitory for backstretch personnel. CDRT also has a year-round simulcast wagering facility. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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